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AUTHOR Cuellar, Sylvia
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ABSTRACT

This study (which involved visits to six British universities, reading of university publications, and interviews with university officials) reveals the following three trends concerning how these institutions serve adult learners: (1) a trend toward offering liberal education courses to the general public for personal development; (2) a shift toward the U.S. model of graduate studies that usually require both research and course work rather than the more typical British model that requires only research; and (3) the Thatcher government's shift in financial support away from higher education and toward vocational education, which reverses the emphasis on an educated general public begun in the mid-19th century. The six universities studied were the University of Sussex, University of Leeds, University of Nottingham, University of Oxford, University of Cambridge, and the Open University. (CML)

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AN INQUIRY INTO ADULT EDUCATION AT SIX BRITISH UNIVERSITIES

Sylvia Cuellar

Abstract

Six British universities were visited in an attempt to learn how these institutions serve adult learners. Information gathered from university publications and interviews with university officials revealed several common trends among these institutions as well as unique differences . Extra-mural courses are offered through linkages with local education authorities and the Workers' Educational Association to the general public with no entrance requirements. The most unique university visited was the Open University in Milton Keynes.

Introduction

> The purpose of an adult education worthy of the name is not merely to impart reliable information, important though that is, it is still more to foster the intellectual vitality to master and use it, so that knowledge becomes, not a burden to be borne or a possession to be prized, but a stimulus to constructive thought and an inspiration to action (Oxford University Centenary Summer School, 1988).

In this ever shrinking world of ours, it is possible and beneficial to learn from other countries how best to serve adult learners. During the summer of 1988, adult education departments of the Universities of Sussex, Leeds, Nottingham, Oxford, Cambridge, and the Open University were visited in England. Interviews were conducted with university

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officials, classes were visited, and materials such as course offerings and annual reports were secured. The following report of findings is a result of this inquiry.

University of Sussex

Centre for Continuing Education

Director: Dr. A. J. Bailey

Contact Persons: Dr. Dorothy Jerrome, Dr. Neville West, Dr. Vivian Griffiths

Location and Background: Falmer, a suburb of the southern coastal resort town of Brighton. Brighton came to public attention in 1750 when Dr. Richard Russell wrote a book about the healing effect of salt water and sea air. In 1782 the Prince of Wales, later King George IV, took up residence here, and Brighton became one of the most elegant and celebrated bathing resorts in the country (Great Britain and Ireland, 1985).

School for Graduate Studies

The School for Graduate Studies in Adult Education at the University of Sussex is divided into three major foci. First of all, the school of education provides inservice education for head teachers (principals). Major topics include external relations with parents and other community members, and the management of money and physical resources. These are practical courses wherein principals examine their leadership styles, analyze various situations, and formulate action plans to bring about the best results.

Graduate Studies Program

The graduate studies program offers Masters of Arts coursework similar to the United States modular system. In the PhD program, research is the sole method of study, there being no courses to take. Those interested in becoming teachers must be graduates and complete the teacher training program to receive their Post Graduate Certification in Education (PGCE).

Centre for Continuing Education

The Centre for Continuing Education offers liberal arts non-degree classes, professsional education inservice for health professionals, and mid-career and professional development courses. The Extra-Mural Department offers courses throughout a 50-mile radius. Although bridging courses to prepare community members for university courses are not offered, about 300 courses are offered for ten to twenty weeks at a time, one evening a week. There are no entry requirements and no exit exams for these personal development classes.

Three programs of study are offered. Literature and the Arts, the largest program, offers 85 courses including music, art history, and creative writing. The Environmental Studies program offers 55 courses on such topics as local geology, archeology, local history, geography, and ecology. The General Program offers 45 classes including the social sciences, politics, philosophy, general science, study skills, and New Horizons, a course for women.

Tutors for these classes are recruited from the University of Sussex and the community. A cooperative effort exists among the university, local education authorities (LEA's, the equivalent of independent school districts in the United States), trade unions, community agencies, and volunteer groups to coordinate programs. The various agencies plan their program, the university supplies the tutors, and those involved share the fees collected. The University of Sussex was the only one visited that had a joint educational program with the Society of Friends Centre (Quaker).

The University of Leeds

School of Continuing Education

Chairman: Professor J. S. Marriott

Contact persons: Dr. Bruce Spencer, Professor Marriott

Location and Background: The city of Leeds, the third-largest city in England, is located at the center of Britain, midway between London and Edinburgh. Settled in 1152, Leeds is now a thriving industrial and commercial city.

The University of Leeds opened its doors to Extramural Studies in 1946 and was expanded in 1951 with the new title of Adult Education and Extramural Studies. In 1982 the title of Adult and Continuing Education was introduced, but four years later the department was again restructured equipping itself with what is probably one of the strongest formal structures for continuing education in any British university.

Now known as the School of Continuing Education within the Faculty of Education, it embraces a number of departments, offices and functions. A new department of External Studies, growing out of the extramural activities, has become a regular department of the University. A new department of Continued Professional Education represents a major upgrading of the Continuing Education section. An office has been established to organize part-time undergraduate course provision and open studies.

Department of External Studies

Extra-mural courses are comprised mostly of joint Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and LEA programs in Leeds, Bradford, and Middlesbrough. Courses are offered ranging in topics from anthropology to local studies to bird study. The New Opportunities program aims to open up educational and other opportunities for adult students while also enabling them to study two academic subjects. Public Policy courses are provided on issues of current public concern such as health issues, international affairs, and development courses for police officers.

The Industrial Studies program comprises approximately 10% of the department work and is on the decline due to the fact that the labor unions have been losing ground since 1979. Unions pay for their members to attend trade union education, labor law, occupational health and safety, miners, and busworkers courses.

The Computing and New Technology for Women project is a reflection of the trend at University of Leeds to work more with women's groups.

Through cooperation with agencies such as language centers, elderly day care centers, and local educational authorities, the program is able to recruit the elderly, disabled, and speakers of English as a second language.

National legislation through the Russel Report has had a major impact on the disadvantaged, creating responsible bodies for the education of the public. Evolving from this national push, the Pioneer Work program deals with primarily unwaged, older, and black students with no experience in higher education. A wide diversity of courses are offered such as pension rights for older Sikh men, Polish history for Polish communities, health issues for Punjabi women, women's discussion groups at nurseries, and a one-year "access" course for blacks wanting to prepare themselves for entry into higher education.

Department of Continued Professional Education

In addition to offering local and national courses and conferences, the department has held several large international conferences. Courses and conferences have dealt with medicine, dentistry, accounting, biochemistry, law and other fields. Among the most notable international conferences were the International Foster Care Organisation Conference and the International Conference on the Basal Ganglia in 1987. North American links have produced two-week courses with the State University of New York, "Leisure in the UK," and the joint conference of the Adult Education Research Conference (AERC) and Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults (SCUTREA) in July of 1988.

The department has contributed to the work of several consortia. Staff development courses were run by a consortium that included the University of Leeds, the College of Building, the Polytechnic, Airedale and Wharfedale College, and Kitson College. Continuing Education has also helped establish the Regional Technology Network with Bradford, Hull, Sheffield, and York Universities, three polytechnics, further education colleges in 11 LEA's and companies and employer organizations throughout the region. The objectives of the network are to promote technology transfer, support training for technological change, assist in the exploitation of inventions and licencing of new products, and to liaise with other networks and organisations engaged in similar activities.

Postgraduate and Professional Studies

Postgraduate and Professional Studies include the study of adult and continuing education with a taught M.Ed. as well as an M.Ed. research degree. The department is modifying the format of the taught degree to consist of a wider range of shorter modules patterned after the United States university system.

The program of applied social studies work includes research and consultancy and short courses. Post-experience work studies include courses in child care research, stress at work, and staff and student supervision.

Collaboration with the Prison Department and with the Prison Service College has been ongoing for many years. The Department's contribution to the work of the Prison Department includes the design,

planning and evaluation of courses, and advisory work at various levels of the Prison Service. (Forty-first Annual Report, 1986-87)

University of Nottingham

Department of Adult Education

Director: Professor M. D. Stephens

Contact Person: Professor Michael Stephens

Location and Background: The city of Nottingham is located approximately 70 miles south of Leeds in the heart of England. Founded by the Danes, it was taken over by the Normans in the eleventh century. Nottingham is known for its lace industry, Robin Hood, and Sherwood Forest.

The University of Nottingham, sitting in a beautifully landscaped forest donated by drug store chain owner Jesse Boote, traces its roots to adult education. As far back as the 1870's the university was providing extra-mural courses to the public. The Department of Adult Education is the oldest and one of the largest of its kind in England. In 1922, the university created the world's first Chair of Adult Education, followed by Britain's first Certificate and Diploma in Adult Education.

The Department of Adult Education is one of three in the Faculty of Education, the others being the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the National Centre of Math Education. The department is divided into three units: Extra-Mural Studies, Industrial Adult

Education Management, and the Centre for Research into the Education of Adults.

Extra-Mural Studies

The extra-mural region covered by the department includes Nottingham and most of Nottinghamshire, South and Mid-Derbyshire, the Boston, Sleaford and Louth Divisions of Lincolnshire, and North Leicestershire. Most of the courses are of a liberal education nature geared for members of the general public. Courses are offered ranging from New English Chorus to study skills classes to Computer Studies. Almost half of the computer courses in 1986-87 were those for disabled adults within the New Link Project, along with several low-fee or no-fee courses for unemployed students and for inmates of Nottingham Prison. Sixty percent of the courses are in association with the WEA, and 34 percent take place in centers provided by the LEA's.

The Division of Continuing Education returned to the Department of Adult Education in 1986/87. The Diploma in Adult Education which is offered is built around Freirean philosophy. The one year full-time or part-time equivalent course is aimed at those who are concerned with the education of adults. Thus, it attracts nurses, priests, social workers, prison education staff, youth workers and Armed Forces instructors. Once the students have completed the course there are reunion days and a newsletter, and they are encouraged to form study circles.

Taught master's degree courses lead to an MEd in Continuing Education. Research degrees of MPhil and PhD are available as well as LEA staff development courses. Efforts are made to utilize Freirean and

adult education principles. Participative methods are used, courses are designed to be relevant to the professional needs of the group, and materials and requirements are flexible in order to adapt to the requirements of the different professions.

Other major programs include residential courses in computer programming for members of Her Majesty's forces, the Certificate in Education of Adults for Nurse and Midwife Tutors, the Centre for Local History (which includes BBC Radio programs), conferences, seminars and day schools, and the Certificate in Theological and Pastoral Studies.

Industrial Adult Education Management

The Industrial Adult Education Division pioneered day release courses for miners in 1921. However, this program has been on the decline due to the local rise in unemployment, the diminishing importance of the large scale employer, and more recently the lack of support from the Conservative Government which has not encouraged the growth of paid educational leave.

The Trade Union Research Unit remains strong. Examples of funded research projects include a study of the employment prospects for unemployed graduates; a comparison of social and welfare insurance schemes in the British and German coal industries; and comparative work on British and U.S. trade unions. Findings of this and other research studies are published in New Technology, Work and Employment, and the Industrial Relations Journal. International conferences and trade union seminars provide liaisons between colleagues and their labor education

counterparts in the various countries. (Report of the Secretary, 1986/87)

Centre for Research into the Education of Adults

Founded in 1978, the Centre for Research into the Education of Adults (CREA) is the only one of its kind in the United Kingdom. The functions of the Centre are to: provide a framework of support for research activities in the Department, produce a newsletter reflecting current research activities and interests, compile a register of expertise within the university and elsewhere, promote the winning of research funds, support the publication and dissemination of research findings, encourage links between teaching, administration and research, and act as a national and international focal point for ressearch in Adult Education.

The CREA offers office accommodation and facilities for scholars on study leave or engaged in research projects. Scholars from Australia, Japan, Canada, Norway and West Germany have enjoyed the stimulus of sharing their experience with University of Nottingham colleagues.

The University of Oxford

Department for External Studies

Director: G. P. Thomas, PhD

Contact Person: Mr. Michael Sibly

Location and Background: Although the "oxen ford" is first mentioned in an Anglo-Saxon chronicle of 912, the settlement was probably already 200 years old by then (Great Britain and Ireland, 1985). The city lies approximately 70 miles northwest of London, and is home of the British Motor Corporation (Beach, 1975).

The University Extension Movement (UEM) began in the 1870's. Between 1850 and 1880, the social and religious exclusiveness of Oxford and Cambridge was broken down, and the universities began taking on the responsibility of providing education for groups and classes previously ignored in higher education. Cambridge first began UEM to meet the demand for higher education for working men and women. The liberal studies emphasized education for its own sake. With a missionary spirit, the University Extension system saw itself as the Salvation Army of Education. (Oxford University Centenary, 1988)

Summer School Program

The first Oxford residential summer meeting of 1888 was attended by 900 students, who met for 10 days of short morning lectures and afternoon addresses on literature and scientific subjects. These summer

meetings were patterned after the American "Chautauqua," an institution which had its origins in a Methodist camp-meeting on the shores of Chautauqua Lake in New York (Oxford University Centenary, 1988). In 1988 the University of Oxford's Department for External Studies celebrated one hundred years of Adult Students' Summer School.

Summer School students from Great Britain and around the world are mostly retired, although unemployed persons and professionals also attend. The age level is coming down, and more and more women are attending. No specific educational qualifications are necessary for acceptance at the Summer School, which lasts for three weeks. Each week has a self-contained program of eight different seminars, and students may attend for one, two, or three weeks. Upon acceptance, the tutor assigns students preparatory reading and an essay to be completed before the school begins. Two essays are assigned during the course. In the course visited, "1888-1988, A Century of Biology", the essays followed the Centenary theme: 1) If you were living in 1888, what would you have liked to discover?, and 2) How has our world changed due to a discovery back in the 1800's?

Other External Studies Programs

Most part-time extension courses offered during the school term are nonresidential in nature. These weekly daytime and evening classes are offered in the counties of Berkshire (except Reading), Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire. The university also organizes day schools and short residential courses, specialist training courses, and study tours.

Topics include education philosophy, social studies, theology, archaelogy, local history, art, literature, music, biology, computing and mathematics, and a host of others.

The Department for External Studies offers a wide range of courses leading to certificates. Most of these courses extend over two or three years and must be completed in residence. There are no formal entry requirements, and credits may be accumulated or transfered to other universities. Upon successful completion of two years of coursework and written work, a mature student may be recommended for admission to the University of Oxford. Certificates are offered in British Archaeology, Biblical and Theological Studies, Local History, Microcomputer Programming, and Psychotherapy. (Part-time Qualifications, no date)

The Professional Development department serves mid-career workers. The department takes part in the national effort, Professional, Industrial and Commercial Updating Programme (PICKUP). PICKUP helps colleges, polytechnics and universities increase rapidly and substantially the amount of adult training and updating they provide to employers. PICKUP also brings to the attention of employers the changes taking place in colleges. (PICKUP in Progress, 1988)

University of Cambridge

Board of Extra-Mural Studies

Director: M. J. Allen, MA

Contact Person: Dr. Jem Poster

Location and Background: The settlement next to the bridge that crossed the river Cam already existed at the time of the Romans. The beautiful country town of Cambridge, known as early as the twelfth century for its educational establishment, today has 31 colleges (Great Britain and Ireland, 1983). Cambridge is located 50 miles north of London.

The socially exclusive University of Cambridge underwent reforms and revisions under H R H Prince Albert (Prince Consort of Queen Victoria), who was Chancellor of the University from 1847-61. New courses were added, and women's colleges were founded (although women at first had to study separately from men and were not allowed to receive a degree). During this time the religious qualification for students was abolished: they no longer needed to be communicant members of the Anglican church nor attend College chapel every day. However, the most radical change of all was the University's decision in 1873 to make university-level education available to adults anywhere in England who would not otherwise have the opportunity. The University Extension Lecture Programme, now the Board of Extra-Mural Studies, sent out lecturers regularly all over the country. Overseas students were first admitted to some extra-mural courses in the 1890's, and the International Summer School was established in 1923. Although extra-

mural courses are university level courses and therefore academically stringent, they are taught for the pleasure of study, open to all with no screening, and do not lead towards a degree. (The University of Cambridge, 1988)

International Summer School

The Cambridge International Summer School provides overseas visitors with the opportunity to study at Cambridge. It is designed for those who wish to find out more about Great Britain in the twentieth century, to examine the background to modern Britain, and to explore Britain's cultural heritage. For those who are not native speakers of English, Term 1 offers classes in English conversation. The program offers a wide choice of courses ranging from politics, economics and sociology, through literature, art history and music, to history and landscape studies. Summer School students have the opportunity to live in student rooms and eat together in college dining halls in one of a number of Cambridge colleges. Optional excursions to the surrounding countryside and historical sites are available. (International Summer School, 1988)

Residential Courses

Throughout the year, short courses of one to five days' duration are offered to the general public at Madingley Hall, a sixteenth-century mansion just outside Cambridge. Weekend courses begin with dinner on Friday, and normally comprise seven teaching sessions, ending with lunch on Sunday. Weekday courses are also available. Some examples of

courses are The Natural History of Bats, Romans in East Anglia, Women of the Renaissance, French Weekend, and Understanding Behaviour. (Residential Courses, 1988/89)

The Open University

Centre for Continuing Education

Director: Mr.Gerald Normie

Contact Person: Mr. Gerald Normie

Location and Background: The city of Milton Keynes lies halfway between Oxford and Cambridge. Totally different from the other cities and towns visited, Milton Keynes became a newly designated city in 1967. Since that time, it has become the fastest growing urban area in the United Kingdom. During the past 21 years Milton Keynes has become a leading center of industry and commerce with a worldwide reputation for innovation and excellence (Milton Keynes Development Corporation, 1985).

The only entrance requirements of the Open University are that students be 18 years or older, and residents of the United Kingdom. Of the more than 200 courses that are currently available, all are home-based studies, with texts and audio visual materials supplied to the students via post. Therefore, the Milton Keynes campus has no students on site, only academics and offices. In addition to the Open University headquarters, 13 Regional Centres and more than 260 study centres are located throughout Great Britain.

Courses are created through course teams consisting of academics who design courses, write the texts, and write the tests; staff tutors

who work directly with groups of students on a regular basis; editors and designers who design the texts; BBC producers who create the television classes, and a course manager. The result of this team is a complete educational package consisting of three components. 1) Visually appealing printed materials, usually paperback books, are created in the design studios at Milton Keynes. 2) Audio visual materials consist of audio and video cassettes as well television and radio broadcasts in the early morning and late afternoon and evening. The BBC has its own establishment on the Milton Keynes campus with a staff of over 400 workers. 3) Home experiment kits, such as for chemistry are dispached to students on loan. In fact, mailing is a major aspect of the Open University with over 35 tons of materials mailed per year.

Over 5,000 tutors are located throughout Britain, most of whom are part-time tutors at other universities. Their job is to meet with small groups of students at study centers on a regular basis, and mark and evaluate their students' essays. Students also get together without their tutors to study in self-help groups.

Efforts have been made to counteract the students' inevitable feelings of isolation. The newspaper, Sesame, provides a link between the Open University and students, as does Open Forum, a weekly radio and television program. In addition, the Open University has a student association and hosts a national conference.

Programs of study include undergraduate studies, a growing continuing education division, single courses from degree programs, higher degrees, general interest courses, the Open Business School, and

professional and scientific updating. The continuing education courses are self-financing and range in cost from £10 for a course requiring only a book to £400 for a course supplying a laboratory set. However, the current conservative government policy is driving up the cost for students. (Welcome to the Open University, 1985) Courses vary in length from a few hours of work for a few weeks, to those that take nine months at the rate of 12 to 14 hours each week.

The Open University is empowered to award nationally recognized qualifications to students who successfully complete a program of study. Certificates or course credits are awarded for successful completion of individual courses. Diplomas are granted for the completion of a number of designated courses. The Bachelor of Arts degree is awarded for successful completion of a program of study over a period of years, and an honours degree, BA with Honours, for study at advanced level. Higher degrees (MA, MSc, BPhil, MPhil, PhD) are awarded for postgraduate study, either taught or by ressearch. (Studying With the Open University, 1988)

While visiting the library on the Milton Keynes campus, a course packet, The Changing Experience of Women, was examined. The kit consisted of 16 brightly colored paperback books with thought-provoking pictures scattered throughout. Each book begins with an introduction and study guide which asks one or more questions to guide the students' focus. After each unit of information and at the end of each book, suggested references are listed to encourage stuents to pursue further study.

Conclusion

Looking at the course offerings of the different university extra-mural departments, the trend seems to be in offering liberal education courses accessible to the general public for personal development. It was interesting to note that the graduate programs are primarily research based, having little or no coursework involved. However, the trend seems to be shifting toward the United States modular system as British universities add more and more coursework. It is unfortunate that the Thatcher government is shifting financial support away from higher education and toward vocational education. It would seem that this emphasis would eventually create a polarized society where higher education is affordable to the upper class citizenry, and the lower class citizenry is left with the only option of vocational education. This reverses the emphasis of an educated general public begun in the mid nineteenth century by H R H Prince Albert.

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